

SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

MR. WILLIAM REDMOND

— TO —

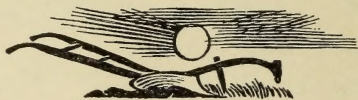
THE MEMBERS OF ST. PATRICK'S SOCIETY
AT THE ANNUAL BANQUET IN
THE WINDSOR HOTEL.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY, MARCH 17TH,

1914

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The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



Queen's University at Kingston

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MEMBERS OF ST. PATRICK'S SOCIETY AT THE ANNUAL BANQUET
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'I esteem myself very favored in having the honor of being here with you to-night. I am on no political mission in this country; I am just returning rapidly, through this great land, home where I hope to take my place within a very few days in the ranks of the great party to which I have belonged for the last thirty-one years. But the chance which enables me to be here is a happy one for me since it gives me the privilege of witnessing the extraordinary devotion exhibited here to the cause of Irish nationality. Your welcome is not a personal one to myself, but I feel it and appreciate it all the more because I know you intend to show your esteem for, and confidence in, my colleagues of the Irish Nationalist party. As the only member of that party on this continent to-night I may say that the confidence of the Irish people throughout the world is well placed in the Irish national representatives to-day, because it is our boast to be able to say, without contradiction, that the National representation of Ireland organized thirty years ago by Mr. Parnell, has remained faithful to its trust, absolutely incorruptible, devoted at all times first, to the cause of Ireland and devoted also, to every good cause which needed support in the British Parliament until to-day, thank God, we are recognized at Westminster, not merely as the representatives of Ireland, but

*With Compliments of
William Redmond
Pres.*

as defenders of the cause of liberty and humanity in Great Britain and every part of the land. (Loud applause).

A Power the World Over.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, before I say a few words that I believe, you may be glad to hear, about the present position of the cause to which we are all pledged at home, will you allow me to re-echo faintly the sentiments expressed by Dr. Walsh and Mr. Fitzgerald when they referred to the wonderful strength, and power and influence of the national race to which we are proud to belong. I have travelled round the world; I have seen our people in every part of it, in the great Commonwealth of Australia, which may be really described as the home of freedom, in the progressive Dominion of Canada, all through this land from Vancouver to Montreal, and in the mighty States of the Union. I have seen our people everywhere. I can say of the people of New Zealand and Australia, and other distant portions of the great Empire, what Mr. Fitzgerald has said of the people of Massachusetts, that wherever our people have gone, they have done honor to the cradle of our race. Not only is this true in Canada in the persons of men like Hon. Mr. Doherty, the Minister of Justice, but in every State of America, in the Commonwealth of Australia and elsewhere, the Irish people hold up their heads amongst the foremost of the land. We can say of them as has been said of the Empire, that the world round the "sun never sets" upon the greatness, the power, the influence and the honor of the Irish race in all those lands where their great qualities are given free play, and where they are allowed the great blessing of governing themselves. (Loud applause).

Ireland's Saddest Chapter.

One of the saddest chapters in the history of Ireland has been the enforced migration of its people. Looking at the population of Ireland to-day of a little over four millions of people, it is almost impossible to believe that, seventy years ago, the population of Ireland was more than half the population of England and Wales, was four times the population of Scotland, was very nearly half the population of all Great Britain. To-day there is

left practically only a remnant of the race at home. On this St. Patrick's Day when we are anxious to banish all trace of bitterness, it is not for me to refer to the causes why Ireland is the only country in this Empire in which men and women have been forced to leave their homes, it is sufficient for us to know that our people have gone, and surely, it is no sign of good government that they have gone. Our consolation is in the fact that they have prospered wherever they have gone. Some races would have been exterminated long ago had they had the experience which has been ours, but not so with our people.

In every part of this Empire the Irish are influential and strong. (Applause).

Millions All United.

If our to-morrow is to be as glorious as we confidently believe, it will be largely because the scattered seed of the Irish race has taken root and is furnishing comfort and help to those who are left. And if, on this St. Patrick's Day, we are more jubilant than ever before, if our cause stands, as it does, in the foremost, occupying a preeminently strong position it is largely because—and how we thank you for it, because you in Canada, our kin in the United States and in Australia, our people throughout the world, have stood behind those in Parliament and enabled them to say “We are making our claim, not for a remnant of our race, but backed by, the sympathy, the support and the hearts of millions of our race, in every part of the world.” (Applause).

Nationalists Wonderful Boast.

I have been for thirty-one years a humble member of the great party which Parnell organized. In that time we have had severe experiences, and prolonged struggles, but it surely is a privilege for me to be able to say that, as St. Patrick's Day has succeeded St. Patrick's Day, we always have been able to mark some improvement in our country. Thirty-one years ago the condition of Ireland was deplorable, from every point of view. The people were handicapped and penalized in every direction wherever we looked. When Parnell and Davitt took up the great

movement now on the eve of consummation, Ireland's condition cried out for betterment; now, am I not entitled to consider myself and my few colleagues who survive the stormy days following the inception of our party, exceptionally privileged and honored to be able to say, as we can say to you, that every item on our programme of reform, which we set out to accomplish, under Parnell's leadership, has been achieved. Ireland is a changed country better fitted for Government, with better conditions of life, the people better educated and better governed. It has been greatly transformed from the Ireland of thirty-one years ago. (Applause). And now we stand on the threshold of the one reform necessary to make every other reform effective in the highest degree; we stand on the threshold of the concession of self-government to our country. (Prolonged applause).

All Reforms Long Overdue.

I have sometimes been asked by our Conservative friends in England how it is since Ireland has so much improved, it is not satisfied with the form of Government under which these reforms have been effected? That is a fair question which is answered very fully in this way: We in Ireland claim that every reform brought about in the last thirty years has been long overdue. Had we a Government of our own there was no doubt we would have accomplished them long before. We may point out that no single one of the reforms was carried in Ireland without paying the price of long years of agitation, of turbulence, of violence, if you will. The Irish people, too, have this characteristic, the better off they are, the more educated they are, the more independent they are, the more absolutely resolved they become never to rest until they enjoy at least a modicum of those self-governing institutions, which have been granted to all other peoples in the Empire and which have made the Empire great.

Extraordinary Political Record.

What are the political facts with regard to Ireland? I claim that what I am about to tell you is the most extraordinary political record that the history of any country in the world can show. In 1885, when we had the third Reform Bill the franchise

was extended and the Irish people at large got the power of saying what they wanted. Even before that with a much restricted electorate the Irish people asked for Home Rule. When that franchise was extended what happened? In 1885 Parnell was sent back at the head of a Nationalist party 86 strong. We have had a great number of elections since then. Election after election has been held, but there has been no change in Ireland. Year after year, bill after bill has been passed for the improvement and betterment of conditions in other parts of Great Britain but all through that period the answer to our one claim has been the same, our attempts to gain what Ireland has wanted for so long have been countered in the same way, and the eighty-five Irish Nationalists in the House of Commons still stand for Home Rule exactly as they did when the franchise was first extended.

Democracy Answers the Plea.

The indisputable claim of Ireland, however, has impressed the present Prime Minister of England, Mr. Asquith, as it impressed Mr. Gladstone, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and the leading British statesmen, Liberal in politics, in Great Britain, and they hold by the principle that you cannot ignore the voice of the people. The voice of Ireland always has asked for Home Rule and the British Democracy at last is answering it favorably.

I do not pretend to be able to speak in detail of the changes that seem to have taken place in the question of Home Rule since I was at home. But I can say this with perfect confidence that there is nothing I know of, that the members of the Nationalist party are not prepared to do, to allay, and to meet, the honest and sincere doubt of any countryman of ours, whether Protestant or Catholic, about Home Rule. (Applause.)

Ready to Make Concessions.

There was a time, I confess, when feeling ran high and bitter in Ireland, but whatever may have been said or done in the early days of the agitation, under co-ercion and exceptional laws, I tell you that in view of the near approach of the responsibility

of Government on Irish shoulders, no member of our party will say one word of provocation calculated to make broader any difference there may be between part of Ulster and the rest of Ireland. We are prepared consistently with the principle for which our fathers struggled, of an Irish Parliament and Government by Irish people, to go to every reasonable length to disarm all reasonable opposition. (Applause).

Irishmen Will Unite.

I hazard the opinion that no section of Irishmen in the long run will consent to the partition of Ireland. (Applause).

There may be those, who, at the commencement, hesitate and doubt, but with my knowledge of Ulster as well as the South of Ireland I hazard the opinion, confidently, that, in the long run, the North of Ireland will throw in its lot with the South. I believe that the people of Ulster are a sturdy race, almost a stubborn race, and I believe if their rights, privileges, properties and particularly, their conscience were touched they would resist strongly and effectively and, under these circumstances every honest man must agree they would be right. But the question we have to ask is, if there be no interference with these rights, or properties of conscience are they a race of men likely to neglect their homes to take the field without just cause?

Dishonest Misleading Opposition.

Since I have been in Canada I have seen a good many expressions as to resistance in Ulster. It is not surprising that they should talk about resistance if their lands and rights of citizenship are endangered, but is it fair to go on assumptions such as these? There is no interference in the Home Rule Bill with the citizenship of any man in Ulster. It is not suggested that he live under another flag to the one he is accustomed to, or that he be deprived, by one single jot, of the privileges he enjoys to-day. Under the provisions of the Home Rule Bill the first thing these gentlemen have to do is to elect their direct representatives and spokesmen to go to the Imperial Parliament at Westminster. That Parliament retains all its power and all its potency for the protection of minorities just as it possesses them to-

day. And I submit, especially here in Canada, that this great question ought to be discussed fairly. Such loose talk as the destruction of citizenship ought not to be indulged in when every honest man must deem such language untrue.

A Cruel Slander.

What is the real fact of the case. The public of Canada and the Empire have been told that Ulster will not submit to Home Rule because the residents in Ulster being non-Catholic, cannot trust themselves in any Parliament in which the men of the Ancient Faith would be predominant. Now, stripped of all subterfuge, that is the kernel of the argument against the inclusion of Ulster with the rest of Ireland. I speak as an Irish Catholic representative, I speak as Catholic of the Catholics and, as such, I submit that the whole of history proves that this is a cruel and heartless and outrageous slander upon the Catholic people to say that it is in them to injure any man because he worships God in his own way. (Applause).

What of Persecution of Catholics.

At this time with our hearts full of hope and the determination to banish all bitterness from our minds, it is not timely to speak of such things, but what a tale could I unfold were I to go back to the treatment accorded us all through centuries because of our faith. We were only emancipated the other day. It was not until years after our Parliament was taken from us by fraud and corruption, not until years after we lost that Parliament without any appeal to the people that we were emancipated. To this day the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland may belong to any faith the law says, but the faith of the majority of the people. It is too, only within the last few years that the present King came to the throne, only when he was crowned, that, for the first time, the slanderous reference to his subjects of the Catholic faith, contained in the Coronation oath, was left out.

Bill Safeguards Minority.

The man who says religious liberty is to be denied in Ireland because the majority of the people are Catholics must be ignorant or cannot believe what he says. But, after all, there are peo-

ple so saturated with prejudice that they cannot believe their religion is not endangered. What do we say to them? Turning to the Home Rule Bill again we say, assuming the people are so degenerate as to act contrary to the whole history of the race, under Home Rule it is impossible for them to do so. The bill contains limitations, safeguards, very galling and almost insulting to a liberty loving people, but we have consented to their inclusion in the Bill to ensure that there is no right of liberty, or citizenship that is not guaranteed by the bill or by the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. If any fair-minded Canadian looks closely into this question he will find there is no real cause for fear in Ireland.

Ulster Dominance Over.

I have nothing bitter to say against those in Ulster who are opposing this measure. I am confident that some of them will be amongst the most valued legislators in Ireland eventually. But they have enjoyed great privileges and ascendancy in the past. During the last one hundred and fourteen years the whole majority of the Irish people have been practically ignored. Ireland has been governed largely by the opinions of people coming entirely from Ulster. We submit that our Protestant countrymen will receive equality. Their rights, even their sentiments and feelings will be scrupulously respected but they will get no more ascendancy. Every man will be judged upon his merits whether Catholic or Protestant. (Applause). Let me give you some figures to show what privileges the Unionist minority have been allowed. Ireland returns 103 representatives to the British Parliament. Of these 85 are strongly in favor of Home Rule and will vote in the same lobby as I do in favor of it in a week or two. Sixteen of these representatives are drawn from a portion of Ulster and are opposed to Home Rule. These are the popular representatives. That distinguished man Sir Edward Carson represents the University of Dublin which is well enough in its way, but for the purposes of popular opinion we will leave the University representatives out. Of the eighty-five Nationalists seventeen are elected from North Ulster. Let me observe that there is no one county in Ireland in which the Nationalists have not elected even one member. (Applause). Now, therefore, what is

the position? You have the whole of three great provinces of Ireland, Munster, Leinster and Connaught, and you have more than half of the elected representatives of Ulster itself supporting Home Rule. The contention of the Ulsterites is that if the Government does not recommend itself to the sixteen minority, even if the eighty-five majority support it there is to be civil war.

An Insupportable Proposition.

Some of the prominent Unionist statesmen seem to have lent their weight to this proposition. What a proposition it is. We see in every country in the civilized world there is a great unrest among the masses of the people; a great movement for better conditions. And what a lesson this is to teach to these unsettled people, that if their way cannot be had, if their way cannot be gained it is legitimate, and even approved in the highest quarters of England, that there shall be an appeal to arms.

I do not believe it is conceivable; I cannot contemplate the likelihood of the hopes of the Irish people being frustrated, but should that take place how are these men to explain the speeches and feelings to which they have given utterance. If it is legitimate for the minority to wage war, what is to be said of the vast majority?

These things only need to be enquired into in order to justify the position of the present Government. I do not believe there will be civil war, I do not believe the world's history shows an appeal to arms without real cause, and if our countrymen in the North wait for justification for war, they will wait for ever.

Ireland's Indisputable Right.

What is considered the duty of the great leaders of progressive thought in England to-day? These men, and all the men of surpassing talent that they have gathered round them, are as sincere in the cause as any of my Nationalist colleagues. They have watched the course of Government in Ireland, they have watched the effect of the present system, and these men and the great majority behind them, and the great majority behind Parliament, occupy the position that they are going to give us Home

Rule because the Irish people have made out a case for it; and, perhaps, because they recognize that the withholding of Home Rule has brought neither credit nor profit to the British Empire.

An Imperial Achievement.

This is not merely an Irish question; it is an Empire question. In spite of all the turmoil, as the thing draws nearer, in spite of all the alarmist reports, I venture the prediction that this question is going to be settled now, that if this Government were supplanted no Government that would take its place could ignore the Irish question. The day for arguing is past, and the utmost our bitterest opponents can say is that they do not like this plan of Home Rule now before Parliament. Ireland is about to be restored the right of governing herself and the result will justify the policy in Ireland as it has been justified in Africa and every other part of the British Empire. (Loud applause). And I believe before long, shortly after this great controversy is settled, our wisest men of both parties will say of Ireland that the policy of trusting the people was right, that Home Rule after all was a great achievement. (Applause).

It will be so from a three-fold point of view. For England it will mend one of the really weak spots in her armor; it will reconcile to England after long years of bitterness, in every part of the Empire one of the most virile of races; it will be a great achievement for this great Empire because the day that sees Irishmen governing themselves in Ireland will move the hearts and spur the energies of Irishmen in every part of the world so that with redoubled vigor they can go into the work of building up and advancing this Empire. (Applause). It will be a great achievement for Ireland. Many in whose veins Irish blood runs to-day, cannot help feeling a strong thrill of elation, knowing that this question is so near to being settled and their home and Motherland being allowed to rule herself within this Empire.

Sorrow and Triumph.

But many of the men who have made this great movement have passed away. Parnell is in his grave in Dublin, and Davitt

is gone. Generation after generation has passed away who have not lived to see this great day. Even since I have come to this country I have to mourn the loss of one who was my colleague in the House of Commons for many and many a day, who brought the enthusiasm of his free Canadian heart to work for the land of his fathers, the Hon. Chas. Devlin. Only those of us who have the blood and history of the past burnt into our brains know what the settlement of this question means to us, and I can only say, and say it reverently, that the dominating feeling of Irishmen everywhere is one of humble thankfulness to Almighty God that He has allowed so many of us to live to see this day for which so many of our forefathers would have died.

When Ireland does, at last, take her place as a nation she will turn with a glad smile to these great countries beyond the seas; she will turn to each and every one of you and thank you for the sympathy given to her in her hour of trial. And she will pass her word, that word which has never been broken, that freedom being granted she is yours, in any thing, hand in hand, in the advancement and development of the Empire against the whole world. (Loud and continued applause).



